

Sermon after 2. hour

Dr. WARREN'S
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the

Sons of the Clergy.

Dr. W. N. P. E. M.

S. E. R. O. N.



Preaching before the

Sons of the Clergy.

The Good Effects of a Publick and Exemplary Piety.

A ^{694.e 8}
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S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the
Sons of the Clergy,

AT THEIR
ANNIVERSARY MEETING
IN THE
Cathedral-Church of *S^t Paul,*
February 17. 1731.

By *ROBERT WARREN, D. D.*
Rector of S^t Mary of Stratford Bow in Middlesex.

Published at the Request of the STEWARDS for that Year.

L O N D O N :

Printed by GEORGE JAMES.

Sold by W. MEADOWS at the *Angel* in *Coruhill*, and J. ROBERTS
at the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane.* M DCC XXXII.

The Good Effects of a Public and Exemplary Fast.

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at the Old Shop in Strand Lane. MDCCLXXXII.

~~of the~~
~~to the~~
~~of the~~
To the REVEREND and LEARNED

Archdeacon Waterland, D. D.

Archdeacon Brideoake, D. D.

Archdeacon Tennison, LL. D.

John Drake, B. D.

William Dean, M. A.

And to the truly Worthy

Guy Rouffignac, M. D.

Stephen Daubuz, Gent.

Thomas Whitfield, Gent.

William Dillingham, Gent.

Matthew Johnson, Gent.

John Warren, Gent.

John Townsend, Gent.

STEWARDS for the late FEAST of the SONS of the CLERGY.

Reverend and Worthy Gentlemen,

*I Was the more easily induced to preach
this Discourse, because it gave me an
Opportunity of expressing the tender Re-
gard I have for the Wants and Afflictions
of the Widows and Children of my de-
ceased Brethren; in which I had nothing
to do, but to represent them just as they
are,*

are, and to press the Obligations of Beneficence in the strongest Manner.

As you were pleased to encourage the Undertaking, I hope you will be so good as to defend the Performance, which is publish'd purely in Compliance with your Desire.

I am persuaded that you perceive a peculiar Satisfaction within yourselves, that you have been assistant to a Charity, which, as it is the most useful in itself, so it is managed and conducted with the greatest Fidelity, and the most Impartial Administration, by those who preside over it. And you have Reason to congratulate yourselves, that you have been the happy Instruments, under God, of supporting a Design, which greatly tends to promote his Glory, and the Honour and Interest of the Church of England.

Such Services as these, will be always regarded by those who have any Sense of Gratitude, or Compassion, and will be number'd by Posterity among the best of your Actions. That

Dedication.

*That the God of Mercy may increase
and multiply his Blessings upon you, who
have so abundantly multiply'd them upon
others, shall be the constant Prayer of,*

Reverend and Worthy Gentlemen,

Your most Faithful, Obedient,

and Humble Servant,

ROBERT WARREN.

A SER.

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A S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the

Sons of the Clergy, &c.

1st Epist. of S. PETER, 2d Chap. and the former Part
of the 12th Verse.

*Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles; that
whereas they speak against you as Evil-doers, they may by
your Good Works, which they shall behold, glorify God.*

WHATSOEVER may be the Original Oc-
casion and *Meaning* of these Words, they seem
to me, so well suited to the *Design* of the pre-
sent Solemnity, that after a short Explanation of them, I
shall proceed to enlarge upon such Doctrines, as seem most
naturally to be imply'd, or express'd in them.

To have our Conversation honest among the Gentiles,
is, to have the greatest Regard to our Behaviour, when we
live among Men of ill Principles and ill Morals; to set be-
fore them a good Example, as the most effectual Means to

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refute

refute the Reflexions and Calumnies which they may cast upon us, if we behave otherwise.

But *this* is not the only good Effect of a Publick and Exemplary Piety; but it does also give them a farther Opportunity of beholding our Good Works, and making such Observations upon the Decency of Virtue, as may provoke them to an Imitation of us.

And whereas a visible Holiness is of a Diffusive Nature, such a Deportment as this, may at length prove a proper Inducement to them to advance to the utmost of their Power, the Glory of God in the Enlargement of his Kingdom.

The Words being thus explain'd, I shall proceed to the Consideration of these following Particulars.

As, 1st, That an Exemplary Piety, is the most effectual Means to promote our own Good.

2^{dly}, It has also a natural Tendency to promote the Good of Mankind. And,

3^{dly}, That it does at last terminate in promoting the Glory of God.

When I have finished these Heads, I shall apply the Whole of this Discourse to the Occasion of our present Meeting.

First then, I shall shew, that an Exemplary Piety has a natural Tendency in it to promote our own Good; and that because it is the most effectual Means to wipe off those Reflexions, which are daily thrown upon our holy Religion, and the Ministers of it.

This was the State of the Christian Church in ancient Times, and I wish it were not too evident that it visibly labours under the same ill Treatment at present.

That

That *Sacred* Order of Men, who are set apart for the *more immediate* Service of God, and who *transcend* in the *Dignity* of their Office, and the *Honour* of their Institution, all other Ranks and Professions of Men *whatsoever*, have been spoken against as *Evil-doers*. They have been branded as the *Burden* of the Nation, as a *Grievance* to Society, as *Fomenters* of *Divisions* and *Animosities*, and as *superstitious Dreamers*. A heavy and a severe Character indeed! But yet *not so difficult* to be *answer'd*, if we consider either the *Persons* from whom these Aspersions come, or the *pretended Motives* from whence they proceed.

The greatest *Enemies* of the *Christian Religion*, and by *Consequence* of *that holy Office* of those who *preach it*, are Men of *licentious* and *atheistical* Principles, such as *believe* there is *no God*, and therefore live as if there *was none*.

Now as it is a *great Duty* of the *Sacerdotal Office*, to speak *home* to the *Consciences* of Men, and to lay before them, *without Fear* or *Favour*, the *fatal Consequences* of an *evil Course*, and the *Terrors* of a *future State*; 'tis *no Wonder*, that *their Persons* are *unacceptable*, that the *Doctrines* they preach are *unseasonable*; Doctrines entirely *disagreeable* to *Flesh* and *Blood*; as serving *only* to *imbitter* their Pleasures, and to *spoil* their *Mirth* in the *gay Entertainments* of Life.

But then there is also *another* kind of *Enemies* to our Profession, *another Set* of *Gentiles* sprung up among us, who are *striving hard* to reduce us to the *ancient Plan* of *Heathen Morality*, I mean our *Modern Deists*.

As the *Limits* of *this Discourse* will not give me leave, at present, to answer *fully* the *Objections* and *Calumnies*

with which they load us, which however, God be thanked, *have been often confuted* by some of our * *Bishops*, and many other † *excellent and learned Men* of our own Order; yet I hope, it will not be *unsatisfactory*, upon this *solemn Occasion*, to give you a *short Account* both of the *Deistical* and the *Christian Schemes*; and then, I doubt not, but it will *evidently* appear, to *which of these Schemes* every *Impartial Man* ought to adjudge the Preference.

The Scheme upon which *these Men* would found a Religion for us, is, *that Reason is an infallible Judge in Divine Matters: That the Law of Nature is a perfect Rule of Life: And that therefore there is no Necessity of a Divine Revelation*; and in Consequence hereof, *that to introduce any new Law which may supersede the Obligations of the Law of Nature, is meer human Imposition, and serves only to puzzle and perplex our Understandings with dark and unintelligible Mysteries, which are contrary to Reason.*

The Scheme advanced by the *Christians*, on the other hand, proceeds upon *more sublime Considerations*, insisting upon the *Necessity of a Divine Revelation*, as *carrying the Measures of Duty to a higher Perfection.*

Now we allow our Adversaries, that *Man is a Reasonable Creature*, and that the *Service of him* ought to be a *Reasonable Service*. But then we *absolutely deny* that *Human Reason* is the *Measure of all Divine Truths*; and therefore we conclude, that there *was a Necessity of a Divine Revelation*; and though there are *many Mysteries*

* Archbishop Wake, Bishop Gibson, Bishop Chandler, Bishop Bull, Bishop Hare, Bishop Sherlock, Bishop Smallbrook, Bishop Potter, &c.

† Dr. Young, Dr. Waterland, Dr. Prideaux, Dr. Mangey, Dr. Cuybear, Dr. Trapp, Mr. Lesley, Mr. Law, &c.

in it, which are *above* the *Comprehension* of *Human Reason*, yet we think that the *Darkness* and *Obscurity* of *those Mysteries*, are *no sufficient Argument* against them, if it be proved (as has been *often sufficiently* proved) that God has revealed them to us; for it appears to us, that 'tis *agreeable* to the *highest Reason* to *believe* what God has revealed.

What I *principally* intend by an *humble Representation* of the *Difference* of *these Schemes*, even upon a *Supposition* that they are *both* of them *equally probable*, is to make *these Enquiries*. Whether or no, the *Christian Scheme* do's *not mostly* tend to the *Improvement* of *human Nature*? Whether it is *not better* suited to *form* us to *more Heroic Acts* of *Goodness*, and a *more complete Pattern* of *Piety*? And lastly, Whether *Nature* when *assisted* and *exalted* by *Grace*, is *not more capable* of making a *greater Proficiency* in *Virtue*? And I think I need not fear to leave the *Decision* of *these Enquiries*, to the *full Determination* even of *Reason* itself.

But whatsoever *Cavils* and *Objections* *these Men* may raise against us, There is *Reason*, and *Argument*, and *Conviction* also, in *every Instance* of an *exemplary Piety*.

A *simple* and *undisguised Sincerity* in *all* our *Actions*, will wipe off *all Imputations* of *Fraud* and *Imposture*: A *mild*, *discreet*, and *peaceable Behaviour*, will *soften* the *rough Dispositions* of *Men*, and *abate* the *Keenness* of their *Malice* and *Resentment* to us; and that *Largeness* of *Heart*, and *Liberality* of *Soul*, which we *ought* to express in our *whole Conversation*, but more especially in *all* our *Charitable Contributions*, will *clear* us of *that unjust Charge* of *sordid Covetousness* with which they load us.

I would

A SERMON preached before

I would not be here interpreted, as if I believed that any good Action whatsoever, prevails upon the Passions and Inclinations of Men, by an irresistible Influence; but yet there is a natural Tendency in it to reconcile them to us; for even the most wicked Men have a Respect and Esteem for Virtue; and that Saying of Solomon will always hold good; *When a Man's Ways please the Lord, he maketh even his Enemies to be at Peace with him.*

Prov. xvi.
7.

I proceed now, in the 2d place, to consider another Argument for a public and visible Piety; and that is, that such a Piety does highly promote the Good of Mankind. Let your Conversation be honest among the Gentiles, that they may behold your good Works: That is, that they may observe, and take Notice of your Behaviour, so as to imitate your Examples, and transcribe your good Actions into themselves.

But before I proceed upon the Proof of this Particular, I conceive myself under some Necessity of attempting to remove one Objection, which I foresee may be made against the Words of the Text, and which does seem also to be confirm'd by other Passages of Scripture.

For to have our Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that they may behold our good Works: Or, in other Words to the same Purpose, to let our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, looks too much like the Ostentatious Practice of the Pharisees, for which they stand censur'd and condemn'd, in that, as the Verse runs, *they did their Works to be seen of Men.*

Mat. v. 16.

There is nothing more frequently recommended in Scripture, than Secrecy and Retirement in our Acts of Piety.
Nor

Nor is there any Vice more deeply branded, as being the highest Instance of Vanity, than a popular Affectation of human Glory.

In relation to our devotional Exercises, the Precept runs thus: *Thou when thou prayest enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father, who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* S. Mat. vi. 6.

In regard to the solemn Duty of Fasting, the Command is, *that we be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance, who disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast.* Verse 16.

With respect to the Offices of Charity, the Injunction stands thus: *Take heed that ye do not your Righteousness before Men, as it signifies in the best Copies of the Original, but which means undoubtedly, and is accordingly translated, Take heed that you do not your Alms before Men,* S. Mat. vi. 1. And at the 3d Verse of the same Chapter, *When thou dost Alms, let not thy Left Hand know what thy Right Hand doth.*

The Commands on the other Side of the Question, seem to lay upon us a contrary Obligation; not to be so close and reserv'd in our Conduct, but to be open and communicative, so as by a visible Piety and Beneficence, to excite in others a noble Emulation to imitate our Virtues.

And for this Reason we are enjoin'd by our blessed Saviour in his Divine Discourse upon the Mount, to be like a City that is set upon a Hill, visible and conspicuous to all that are about it; to be like the Salt of the Earth, which has a Quality of Seasoning other things to which it

is applied; and in a seeming Contradiction to the Pre-
 Verse 15. cepts above-mention'd, to be like a Candle, which giveth
 Light to all that are in the House.

Now in order to vindicate the *Wisdom* of God, and
 to reconcile the apparent Contrariety of these Passages, I
 desire in the

1st place, It may be consider'd, that the *Wisdom* of
 God, in the Revelation of his Will to Man, seems to
 have had a plain Regard to the different Circumstances of
 human Life, whether we consider him in a publick or pri-
 vate Capacity, and to have prescribed such Laws as were
 well suited to those Circumstances under both Capacities.
 But then,

2^{dly}, It is reasonable, that it be farther considered,
 what ought to be the chief End, and Design of all our
 Religious Actions. The same Action under different Views,
 cannot properly be termed the same Action. Any parti-
 cular Action done with a selfish Prospect of Applause, is
 not a good Action; nor is it intitled to a Reward. For
 to constitute any Action morally good, it is necessary, among
 other Qualifications, that a Man propose to himself a good
 End in the doing of it.

Now there is a great Difference between doing our
 good Actions that Men may see them, and thereby, copy
 after our Examples, and doing them only to be seen of Men.
 And again there is a greater Difference between doing
 our Good Actions, in order to glorify God by so doing,
 than by doing them only to procure the Glory and Praise
 of Men.

For

For to do our good Actions, only that Men may see them, is a very mean, and an ignoble End; but to do them in order to the Benefit and Service of Mankind, this is a Design worthy of ourselves. 'Tis, if the Expression may be allow'd, to be like God, in what he is most our God, the Communication of his Goodness.

And thus having more fully explain'd these seeming Inconsistencies, as I propos'd, I shall proceed to shew, that a public and visible Piety does highly tend to promote the Good of Mankind. It is a matter which deserves our most humble Adoration, and our highest Praise; to observe that the most high God has made even our Senses the Instruments of Virtue, and subservient to the great Ends, and Purposes of Religion. O! with what a great and awful Idea of the Author of Nature does it fill the Mind of Man, when he beholds the Wonders of the visible Creation? And, what, I pray, is an exemplary Piety in the Moral World, but a publick Appeal to the Sight of others? What, I say, but a visible Representation of Religion, in all its native Beauties, and alive, as it were, in all the Graces and Virtues of its Professors?

The Force and Prevalency of public Example is so great, that it shews Men the Amiability and Excellency of Holiness. The Loveliness and Excellency of it, strikes Men with the Love and Admiration of it; and when once they have proceeded so far to love and admire Virtue in others, they are easily persuaded to practise it themselves.

There are many Christian Graces and Virtues, which would seem to lie Idle and Dormant within us, if they were not discovered and made apparent to the World by some outward Manifestations.

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The Innocence and Integrity of our Thoughts; the Regularity and Government of our private Appetites and Desires, the Sincerity of our Repentance, and the Fidelity of our Vows and Resolutions which lie conceal'd from human Observation, are all illustrated and explain'd by an exemplary Righteousness.

This is the clearest Evidence, and the most demonstrative Proof of our Love to God, of our Faith in him, of our Trust in his Promises, of the Belief of his dear Son our Blessed Saviour, and of our Conformity to his Example: And, in short, this is a sufficient Testimony of the Infusions of his Grace, of the Influences of his holy Spirit, of our Goodness to others, and indeed of all the inward Reasons, and Motives, which excite and stir up Men to Obedience and Holiness. But,

3dly, A public and exemplary Piety does highly tend to promote the Glory of God. To glorify, in the fullest Sense and Extent of that Word, does signify to make any Person more glorious than he was before, by a fresh Addition of Commendation, Honour or Praise.

But as the Glory of God is Perfect, Essential, and Infinite; His Glory, as the Psalmist expresses it, being above the Heavens; what new Increase of Majesty and Greatness can be ascribed to him, who may not improperly, be called, GLORY in the HIGHEST?

To glorify God in a Christian Sense, is no more, humanly speaking, than in the first place, to publish to the World, what high and honourable Thoughts we have of him, by a due Celebration of his Praises, so that in the Language of the Royal Psalmist, we shall speak of the Glory

Psal.
cxlviii. 13.

Psal. cxlv.
12.

Glory of his Kingdom, and talk of his Power; to make known to the Sons of Men his mighty Acts, and the glorious Majesty of his Kingdom: Or else,

2dly, To evidence and make it appear to Men, by a bright and shining Conversation, that we would recommend to others the Enlargement of Christ's Kingdom; and that by transforming ourselves into the Divine Likeness, we would provoke others, as much as we can, to an Imitation of ourselves.

The several Ranks and Orders of Inanimate Beings, do highly promote the Glory of God, by the exquisite Fineness of their Workmanship, and by acting according to those stated Laws, which the God of Nature has prescribed them. In this Sense it is, that *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work.* ^{Psal. xix.}

And then principally does all the Rational Creation promote his Glory, when they transcribe the glorious Perfections of him into themselves.

The Glory of God ought to be the great, and last End, not only of all our moral, but indeed of all our other Actions of what Kind, or Complexion whatsoever. *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* ^{1 Cor. x. 31.}

This ought to be the main Scope and Intendment of every Good Action in particular, and the very Point, in which all the Lines of Duty ought to center. Nay the Glory of God ought to be not only the End, but the Beginning also of all moral Duties. For this Reason, it is not improbable, that our blessed Lord has placed it not only at the End, but also at the Entrance of that excellent Form

of Prayer which he prescribed to his Disciples: The first Petition of which is, *that the Name of God may be hallowed*, or, which is the same thing, *glorified*; and the Conclusion of that Prayer ascribes to God, *that Tribute of Praise, which is worthy of him only; For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory.*

That which God proposes to himself as the End of all his Actions, is *his own Glory*. This is the End not only of those single Acts which terminate in himself, but is likewise the End of all those Proximal Acts, which respect his Creatures.

Now that which God has made the Principal End of his own Actions, ought, as he is our great Example, to be the chief End of ours.

There may be, and indeed there are several other subordinate Ends, which a Man may lawfully propose to himself by an *exemplary Virtue*; but the Truth of it is, they are no farther warrantable, than as they are the instrumental Means of promoting the Glory of God.

The subordinate Ends, which good Men are allow'd to have a Regard to, in the Exemplification of their Virtues, are no farther justifiable, than as they are subservient to that End only. For all our Natural and Spiritual Capacities, whereby we are enabled to glorify God, we received from him only; For we are not our own, as S. Paul assures us; and the Inference which he draws from thence is, *Therefore glorify God in your Bodies, and in your Spirits, which are God's.*

1 Cor. vi.
20.

I come now, in the last place, to apply what has been said to the Occasion of the present Solemnity, and so conclude.

To

TO YOU, therefore, Men, Brethren and Fathers; to YOU whose Education and Profession instruct you to exemplify the Duties of the Text in the most extensive manner; I do with more Assurance of Success, most respectfully address myself; because I am fully persuaded, that as your Conversation is generally honest among the Gentiles, and that you glorify God by a Life every way agreeable to your Function, (though some speak against you as Evil-doers) so you came into this venerable Assembly, on this joyful Day, to let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

I hope that it will not be interpreted as spoken with too great an Air of Vanity and Ostentation, when I observe, that there is scarce any one Order of Men in this Kingdom, who have gone farther in a noble and generous Beneficence, than many celebrated Divines of the Church of England; and I doubt not, but that their present Successors are filled with the same Exuberance of Charity; that they are animated and encouraged by their great Examples: That they are moved, and indeed inflam'd by the same compulsive Arguments, that they have the same Sympathies of Nature, the same Bowels of Mercy, and the same Relentings of Heart.

I do not request of you to express your Mercifulness to the Distress'd Widows and Orphans of our Deceased Brethren, meerly as Act of Favour; but principally because you are convinc'd, that they have a Right to it.

When I seriously consider the unhappy Circumstances of those melancholy, afflicted Persons whom I would humbly recommend as the proper Objects of Charity to this whole Congregation; I cannot mention them without the
most

most tender and affectionate Concern, I had almost said, without a deep and sorrowful Sighing, and a pungent Feeling of their Necessities—The Fatherless and the Widows!

The innocent Fatherless, and disconsolate, helpless Widows of CLERGYMEN! Men of God, painful and laborious, it may be, throughout all the Stages of Life! Liberal! always devising Liberal Things, tender-hearted, ready to give out of the small Returns of their daily Labours, and nightly Studies: Men! that could never find in their Hearts to turn away their Faces, or to give a deaf Ear to the mournful Cries and importunate Intreaties of any Persons in Poverty or Distress! Men! that have in the most humble yet earnest Manner, in Season and out of Season, in the Church of God, and at their own and others Houses, craved and pleaded for the Relief of the Necessities of others, when it may be at the same time, they have been short of the Comforts, or wanting the Necessaries and first Conveniencies of Life for themselves and their Families.

2 Tim. v.
10.

Of Widows, who during their Husbands Lives, have lived in a reputable Condition, who have been modest and grave, sober and temperate in all Things; and in the Apostle's Language, well reported of for good Works. And of Children, whose Age and Weakness disables them to provide for themselves: I say, when I seriously reflect upon the Calamitous Condition of all these respectively, these I conceive, are still fresh and cogent Arguments for an unbounded Pity and Compassion.

I cannot believe that the Mind of Man can ever form to itself a more lively Image of Pity, than to contemplate Youth and Innocence, depriv'd not only of the Consolations,
but

but even of the *Necessaries* of Life;— brought up, it may be, under the *greatest Advantages* of a learned Education, but *unhappily* all on a sudden, almost left alone to the *Cravings* of Want, to the *Danger* of Temptations, and the *Allurements* of a wicked World.

To be *merciless* and *hard-hearted* upon such sad Reflexions as *these*, is to *divest* ourselves of our *common Humanity*, and to break thro' the *firmest Bonds* of Nature.

Observe, I beseech you, the *moving Tenderness*, which our dear Redeemer expresses to *these little ones*: *Whosoever shall receive one such little Child in my Name, receiveth me.* S. Matt. XVIII. 5.

To *bear* the *Wants* and *Afflictions* of human Life, with *Meekness*, *Patience*, and an *entire Submission* to the good Will of God, is *one* of the *greatest Instances* of *Christian Fortitude*, even in a *single Person*:— But for a *Mother* to *fear* them, nay to *see* them in her *Children*, must *stir up* all the *Softness* of *maternal Affection*, and ought to *move* us almost with the *same tender Commiseration* of them, which *she* feels within her own Bowels.

These, these are the *Objects* to whom I would fain persuade you even to *enlarge* your *Benefactions*. The *weeping Eye*, the *bountiful Hand*, and the *merciful Heart* were all originally formed for such *mournful Occasions* as *these*.

The *Persons* for whose sake I would further beseech your *Compassion*, are, in a *Spiritual Sense*, even *Bone* of our *Bone*, and *Flesh* of our *Flesh*. They are of the *same Household* of *Faith* with ourselves.

There is, I say, a *Spiritual Relation*, whereby we are *united to them*, as *one Family*, whereby we are all enrolled as *the*

the Children of God, as Heirs of the same Hope, and Promises, as baptiz'd into the same holy Covenant, as made and created by the same God and Father, as redeemed by the same gracious Lord and Saviour, and sanctified by the same Divine Spirit. These Considerations, as they are all of a Spiritual Nature, are the most sublime Arguments for a more compassionate Regard to those who are of the same Christian Society with our selves.

And yet still there is also another Consideration for our Charity to them; and that is, *that natural Relation* they bear to them who were most nearly related to Christ; of those who were his Representatives here, and Ambassadors in his Name, who were commissioned to their Office by his Appointment, in order to reconcile God to Man, and Men to one another.

O! What greater Reason then can be given for an inward Sense of their Wants, who are the Disconsolate Relicts of those who have fought a good Fight, kept the Faith, and have finished their Course with Joy? Whose Time was wholly taken up for the Good of Souls, and who, though being dead, and gone into the happy World, yet speak to us in the Wants of their destitute Widows and Children, and in the Offices which they have done for the House of God.

Nehem.
xiii. 14.

There seems nothing wanting to complete the Misery of these Sons and Daughters of Affliction, but the unhappy Circumstance of their Numbers; and yet this is another Ingredient of it.

A most moving Consideration this! For to supply the Wants of a Private Person, may be done many times with Ease and Agreeableness. To relieve the Necessities of a Family,

Family, it is possible, may be done without *over-straining* our Circumstances; but to supply the *pressing* Wants of a *Multitude*, a large Society of *distressed* People, some thousands, as appears by Computation, of *Orphans* and *Widows*, may be thought by some Persons of a *narrow* and *penurious* Spirit, to be *almost impossible*, and not to be done without the *greatest Injustice* to our *selves* or *Families*.

But I hope better Things of you, my Brethren, and that ye have not so learned Christ. This is not the Doctrine which our Fathers have preached unto us, who have taught us, that our *Charity* ought not only to be *fervent*, but that it ought to *diffuse* and *extend* itself to all the *Wants* and *Exigencies* of Men, and especially to them who are of the *Houhold of Faith*.

When I see before me such a *venerable* Appearance of *Great* and *Good* Men *shining* almost in all the *Professions* and *Occupations* of *Civil* Life, I am encouraged to hope, that this *Objection* of *Numbers*, may be easily answered.

It is the *noblest* Exercise of our *Virtue* to contend with *Difficulties*. If the *Objects* are many and their *Demands* great, the greater is our *Charity* in making our *Supplies* commensurate to them; and tho' it cannot be expected that an *Assembly* even so numerous as this is, should sufficiently relieve, yet I cannot suspect the *Bountifulness* of them so far, as to believe that they will not make the most ample *Provision* for them.

But there is yet remaining, amidst these Scenes of *Want* and *Affliction*, one *enlivening* Consideration, which seems to promise a farther Increase of this best of Charities; and that is, that it has been thought *worthy* of the *Regard* and

*Encouragement of * Illustrious Princes, who as Nursing Fathers, and Nursing Mothers, by their Royal Bounty, and great Example, have given a large Success to it.*

The *same grateful Acknowledgments* are due to † one of the *most munificent Sons of the Prophets*, a *Person form'd both by Nature and Grace for the greatest A&ls of Generosity and Beneficence*, whose *Name ought to be mention'd with Honour*. And *so long as this Charity, which, I trust in God, will never fail, shall be preach'd among us, there also that this good Man hath done, will be always told for a Memorial of him.*

I shall not pretend critically to determine what Part of our Income may be thought necessary to bestow upon charitable Uses, or nicely to apportion the Measures of our Beneficence; yet I humbly give it as my Opinion, that we cannot dispose of it with more Advantage, and to the greater Glory of God, than by largely contributing to the Relations of that holy Order of Men, who did more immediately devote themselves to his Service.

The Decisions of this kind, I mean, at what particular Times and Places, and in what Proportions, every private Man will choose to bestow his Charity, even the Manner, the Objects, and the particular Ends and Views by which he will direct it, these Considerations are all of them left to human Prudence and Discretion.

The general Rule to be observed in all Distributions of Charity is, to be merciful after our Power, if we have much to give much, if we have little, gladly to give of

* King Charles II. Queen Anne, King George I. and Queen Caroline.

† Dr. Turner, the late worthy President of C. C. C. Oxon, who gave by Legacy to this Corporation, the Sum of 20,000 l.

that little, remembring always, that God loveth a chearful Giver; and that our Charity in giving to others, ought to rise in Proportion to what we have received from God; and the Largeness of his Benefactions to us ought in some Degree, to be the Measure of all our Benefactions to others. This way of Proceeding is intirely agreeable to that Rule of Justice and Equity mention'd in Scripture; *Freely* ^{S. Mat. x. 8.} *ye have received, freely give.*

I hope I shall not be thought to carry this Enquiry too far, if I omit not to mention an Opinion which is strongly confirm'd by the Authority of the Fathers, and which indeed seems to me very reasonable; and that is, that we ought to contribute to the Poor in the fullest manner, what is superfluous, and unnecessary for our selves.

This probably may be look'd upon as too great a Measure of Charity, and what may sometimes prove injurious to us; and yet S^t Chrysostom, S^t Basil, S^t Jerome, and S^t Austin, are all of them of this Opinion; and the Text upon which these Authorities are grounded, is that mention'd by S^t Luke in his 3d Chapter and 11th Verse: *He that hath two Coats, let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath Meat, let him do likewise.*

I have not Time in the Conclusion of this Discourse, to discuss at large this Point; yet I humbly conceive, that in all disputable Cases of this kind, especially in all publick Charities, our Beneficence ought rather to exceed, and to spend and dilate itself in a wider Channel.

To conclude, Let us all depend upon the never-failing Providence, and the exceeding great and precious Promises of a good and gracious God for a Reward; of that God, who
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is a Father of the Fatherless, a Husband to the Widow, and a present Help in Time of Trouble. Let all our Studies, Actions, and Endeavours, and even these our charitable Contributions be directed chiefly to his Glory, and the immediate and eternal Benefit of his People; and then will that fervent Prayer of good Nehemiah, Chap. 13. and Ver. 14. be fulfilled upon us: Remember us, O our God, concerning this, and wipe not out our good Deeds that we have done for the House of our God, and for the Offices thereof.

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the Wills of these thy Servants, that they plenteously bringing forth the Fruit of good Works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded, through Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom, with God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

F F N I S.